

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 266 052

SO 016 748

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TITLE Children, Kitchen and Computer: Women--Torn between Family and Job. Developments in the Federal Republic of Germany. Social Report.
INSTITUTION Inter Nationes, Bonn (West Germany).
REPORT NO SR-4-85(e)
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 28p.
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cooperative Programs; *Employed Women; Employment Opportunities; Family (Sociological Unit); Family Size; *Females; *Feminism; Futures (of Society); Marriage; Older Adults; Population Trends; Sex Bias; *Sex Role; *Social Attitudes; Technological Advancement
IDENTIFIERS West Germany

ABSTRACT

Focusing on the changing roles and consciousness of women currently living in the Federal Republic of Germany, this report is organized under seven topical headings. The first section, "Women and Politics," comments on the increasing influence of women in local politics, with 36 women currently occupying the posts of Lord Mayor, Mayor, Senior Town Director, and Town Director. The second section, which examines employment as part of the life plan, concludes that although most girls in Germany consider a vocation as an integral part of their plans, they continue to gravitate toward traditionally female occupations. The third section, "New Technologies--Chances for Women?" suggests that while new technologies lead to the abolition of women's traditional jobs, they create new and, in most cases, better ones. Sections 4 and 5, which deal with the vocational reintegration of women after long periods away from the work force, describes a project devised by a federal committee on social policy entitled, "New Start at 35" and the role of women's cooperatives in facilitating this return to work. The next section, on marriage and the family, examines both the continuing trend toward the small family and upward trends in divorce, number of unmarried persons living together, and women desiring economic independence. Observations concerning changing attitudes of younger women in the Federal Republic of Germany and an increasing social responsiveness to "violence against women" are followed by the final section discussing the increase in the number of older women by 1990, particularly older women who are divorced, widowed, and single. A bibliography and addresses of seven women's organizations conclude the paper. (LH)

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Special Report

Children, Kitchen and Computer

- Women - torn between family and job -

Developments in the Federal Republic of Germany

by

Martina I. Kischke

Bei Abdruck Beleg erbeten

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Introduction

The "Decade of the Woman" ends this summer - a 10-year period started by the United Nations in 1975 with the "Year of the Woman." It has been a decade that has brought new technology and changes in the world of labour everywhere. The day-to-day life of women has not remain unaffected. In the Federal Republic of Germany are in the majority with 52 per cent of the population. According to the latest statistics 32 million women were living in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1983. About 40 per cent of all employed and self-employed persons are women.

The proportion of women among the unemployed is high. This is due in part to changes in professional life. A large number of that have been rationalised out of existence by high technology used to be done by women.

The "Decade of the Woman" and the high rate of unemployment among women are to a certain extent related. Both have resulted in a change of attitude. Self-awareness has grown. So has the realisation that mastery of a profession or trade is a far more valuable acquisition than the traditional dowry which parents formerly gave to their daughters when they married. In the Federal Republic of Germany people have developed a new perception of the roles of men and women. This is a change that only 10 years ago, did not seem at all likely. "Our son can study but the daughter can go out and earn a bit of money, she will only get married anyway" - This sentence is scarcely heard nowadays from the lips of any father between Flensburg and Munich.

Equality between men and women in the Federal Republic of Germany is enshrined as a fundamental right in the Constitution. In the Basic Law of 1949, the second paragraph of Article III states: "Men and Women have equal rights." The women citizens of the Federal Republic have lived with their rights for decades. But it seems as though their wider significance has only become

fully clear to them in the last 10 years. They are fighting against unequal treatment in their jobs and have gained a new awareness of their own value.

The process of change in women's consciousness has been a long one and it has still not been concluded. In summer, 1984, the Federal Minister for Youth, Families and Health admitted frankly in the documentation on "Women in the Federal Republic of Germany": "The granting of equal rights in the Federal Republic of Germany has still not brought about the complete and real equality of men and women. This is due principally to the conditions under which men and women carry out their tasks in society, the family and in working life." The double burden of holding down a job and looking after a family still falls mainly on the woman. The traditional division of roles cannot be changed and completely done away with in the space of 10 years. But women have become more conscious of their rights. And society too is more sensitive to the needs of women.

1. Women and politics

It was in January, 1985, at the F.D.P. Women's Congress in Essen. Hans-dietrich Genscher, Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany and for many years chairman of the F.D.P., demanded the creation of a "Federal Commissioner for Women's Questions." The politician hoped by this means to exert more power and to focus more public attention on the needs of women.

A few days later the leading coalition party, the CDU, promised to give women in the Federal Republic of Germany more political influence with the aim of achieving equality between men and women in practice - literally "in everyday life" - by the end of the century.

The political wooing of the women comes as no surprise. For the women's vote in this country is what to a large extent decides the elections. Women form the largest group of potential voters. The Federal Families Ministry has worked out exact figures: "In the Federal elections in 1973 20.1 million men and 23.3 million women were entitled to vote. Women made up about 54 per cent of all registered voters."

These figures have not changed much since then. And so the CDU Women's Association pressed their male political associates in November, 1984, to do more for women. The CDU ladies stated plainly: If the CDU loses the majority of women voters it will no longer be able to govern.

The sharp words of the women in the party were justified for in the Sixties the CDU had a permanent majority of 10 per cent of the women's vote in the Federal Republic of Germany. In the last elections to the Federal parliament the Women's Association calculated that this advantage had shrunk to 1.5 per cent. Younger women in particular felt that their interests were better taken care of by the Social-democratic Party and the "Greens."

In the SPD the women also brought pressure to bear on their male colleagues. The "internal atmosphere" of this party was also "antiwoman" said Eva Ruehmke, head of the Hamburg steering group for the realisation of equality for women in October last year. And at an SPD area party congress she self-confidently described the women's movement as "the most important social movement of the present day."

Without doubt women in the Federal Republic of Germany have become more self-aware. The sister-party of the CDU, the CSU is also feeling the stirrings of rebellion. A few days before Christmas the Women's Union of the CSU expressed a very specific wish - the appointment of a woman State Secretary to the Federal Chancellor's Office. This, they felt, would ensure the equality of women "in all spheres of lawmaking."

CSU Federal member of parliament, Ursula Maennle said it was important to have women's interests represented effectively in dealings with the specialist ministries.

Women have had their own representation in Bonn since July, 1979, when the "Working staff group Women's policy" was integrated with the Federal Ministry for Youth, Families and Health.

Its task, as formulated by the Ministry, is "to examine all relevant plans of the Federal government in the light of their significance for women." In addition this staff group is charged with "developing ideas for taking account effectively of the needs of women and passing on these ideas as suggestions to the specialised departments responsible." Finally the staff group is supposed to carry out research and prototype projects with the purpose of finding further opportunities for abolishing handicaps to women."

The staff group on women's policy has a sort of advance-guard function in the campaign to give women more power in political life for the advancement of their interests. A "Federal Commissioner for Women's Questions" or a woman State Secretary in the Federal Chancellor's Office could further these efforts even more.

On the level of the Federal Laender (States) and, more recently on the level of local politics the existence of the staff group for women's policy has had an exemplary effect.

The Land (State) governments have established their own "Equalising offices" for women's policy. As these cannot cope with all the local problems that crop up in this field many towns have also appointed Women's Commissioners.

Though these are unable to play an active role in community lawmaking they can often make an important contribution in the town council debates.

The establishment of such "Equalising offices" was not achieved without protest from the men in some cases. When the first Women's Commissioner was appointed by a town council in the Federal Republic of Germany - she was Lie Selter in Cologne - an FDP man complained in the council chamber:

"This is a direct step towards matriarchy." Lie Selter has held her appointment since August, 1982. Since then she has followed by Women's Commissioners in other cities. In towns where Cologne's example has not yet been followed people have taken the initiative and set up groups to push for similar communal women's bureaux.

These bureaux are not intended to deal with major world-shattering problems but with small local problems and

complaints from the public. But it is this type of "grass-roots" work that plays such a big part in changing women's awareness. Cologne's Women's Commissioner Lie Selter, discussing her job, says: "Sometimes I am on duty for 60 hours a week. It is only possible because I have a partner who shares fully in the tasks at home."

The importance of local authority "equalising bureaux" can be gauged from the fact that 80 per cent of what comes into the staff group, women's policy at the Federal Families Ministry in Bonn is concerned with local problems - that is to say they are problems that cannot be solved in the Federal capital but only on the spot.

Women's interest in questions of local policy has also increased. What was formerly regarded as men's business is today in many places women's business too. The number of women members of town and district councils has increased in recent years. In some councils women number over 15 per cent. In the Land (State) parliaments the proportion of women members at the beginning of 1984 was between six and 15 per cent, in the Federal parliament it was 8.5 per cent. The number of women members in the political parties has also increased - only in the upper reaches of the party leadership are women still poorly represented (with the exception of the "Greens"). Even in the Federal cabinet there is only one woman - the Education Minister, Dorothee Wilms.

The more influential the political positions the more jealously the men seem to cling to office. Equal rights - yes why not; but equality of position - that is for many men something quite different, particularly in the political field. But women are no longer satisfied with fine words and political promises. As the SPD member of parliament, Renate Schmidt said recently in Bonn: "The idea that equality can only be attained in cooperation with men is nonsense. In practice, in specific cases we shall have to push our demands through against the opposition of men. For every place occupied by a woman is one less for a man. It is a battle for power."

Without any doubt women's self-confidence has increased, particularly in the political field. One proof of this is that the Federal Republic of Germany now has 36 women occupying posts as Lord Mayor, Mayor, Senior Town Director and Town Director. The Federal Families Ministry notes that more and more women are prepared to take on political responsibility. But it is admitted even by the Ministry that "men still have the best chances, as always, when offices and positions are being distributed that are associated with representation and decision-making."

2. The job as part of life

"There is a certain amount of evidence that girls have developed a different view of themselves and their future as well as the role that a vocation plays in their lives from what has been commonly assumed - by researchers among others - until recently. Girls are changing. They have freed themselves to a large extent from the role that society expects them to play; they no longer expect to be dependent on a partner for their whole life, they demand financial independence for themselves and know that they can only attain this by learning and practising a job with qualifications."

This was the conclusion arrived at in autumn, 1984, by the women publishers of the investigation "Girls and Women - Jobs and Biographies" which appeared in the German Youth Institute in Munich, a central sociological research institute on the Federal level. For a girl planning her future these days her vocation is the first priority.

Even though, as girls, they may find it more difficult to obtain a trainee job, they try to overcome the barrier by putting up a better performance at school. Their level of education has improved considerably in recent years. In 1960 50.2 per cent of the early school-leavers were girls; in 1982 it was only 45.7 per cent.

At the same time the number of girls going on from the ordinary general school to the intermediate grade school rose from 52 to 53.5 per cent and among the grammar school pupils in the secondary grade II the proportion of girls rose from 36.5 to 50 per cent. The average marks of the girls in the final reports are consistently better than the boys.'

The Federal Ministry for Education and Science has also noted the change in the attitude of young women towards a vocation. The woman Minister, Dr. Dorothee Wilms declared recently: "The necessity of a good vocational training for girls is now socially recognised just as is the right of women to earn their own living. In the course of only one generation a remarkable change has taken place in the attitude of girls and women to vocational training and going out to work."

This is indeed the case. Only 20 years ago a project such as the one sponsored by the Education Ministry under the slogan "Girls in Men's Jobs" would have been unthinkable. Not only would there have been protests from parents about "unfeminine work" but there would have been little cooperation from master-craftsmen in the workshops. In the meantime however much has changed for the better in this respect. Following a prototype programme "Girls in Men's Jobs" which was carried on for five years in the Lower Saxony towns of Brunswick, Celle, Burgdorf, Hanover, Goettingen and Stade under scientific supervision, the experts reported good results in December, 1984. The young women - to summarise their report - were equal to the demands of job-training in the commercial-technical field.

The programme "Girls in Men's Jobs" was extended to 29 areas in the Federal area and Berlin (West) and 1,232 girls were trained in 75 skilled crafts in the commercial-technical field. Only 17 per cent of the girls dropped out during training.

After passing their exams as "journeymen" or skilled workers, sixty-five per cent of them soon found jobs in the particular trades they had learnt. Their examination results were also creditable. Birgit Meier (21) passed her final examination as a pipefitter last year with the rare commendation "very good" from the Chamber of Industry and Trade in Friedberg (Hessen).

The foundations for a different attitude towards taking up a profession or trade are laid in the school. "The way they are prepared in school has a considerable influence on how young women turn out later in the technical trades," said Peter Diepold from the Seminar for Industrial Teaching at Goettingen University. In other words, girls should be encouraged as soon as possible during their schooldays to take a more intensive interest in science and technology.

For most girls today a vocation is an integral part of their plans for the future. But if they get no encouragement from their parents or the school all too often they tend to pursue typical women's jobs such as doctor's or dentist's assistant, saleswoman, office-worker or hairdresser. Of the 430 recognised vocations for which training is necessary, about 400 are open to young women. The girls themselves do not take enough advantage of the opportunities that exist. Whereas the women's jobs are all overfilled. This is why girls are so numerous among the young people who cannot find work. This is where schools and employment bureaux should provide much more advice and orientation. Vocational advice must be improved in the schools above all. This has now been recognised by the Federal education ministry.

Ministry officials have discovered a similar problem with girl university students who, with only 38 per cent of available places, are under-represented.

The situation is similar at the specialist universities where the proportion of women is barely 30 per cent. One of the main reasons for this is that girl university entrants show a preference for certain kinds of study.

But one thing is certain - at whatever grade they finish school girls in the Federal Republic regard their future vocation as a main consideration in planning their lives. The Bonn study "Everyday life and biographies of girls" expresses this - in a little more roundabout way - thus: "More and more girls include training for a job that requires qualifications in their plans for the future. There are various reasons for this - women's struggle for more autonomy and independence, initiated by the new women's movement, has become a process of social development which has affected girls' awareness of self. The first attempts at sexual-specific teaching have reinforced the girls' desire for autonomy and motivated them to planning their lives for themselves and not in dependence on a man. Even those parents, teachers and guardians who continue to regard marriage and bringing up a family as the main task for women, advise them to take up some trained vocation because failures are becoming more and more common in the family 'sector' as the increase in the divorce rate makes evident."

That it is possible with the aid of imagination and goodwill to help girls find the right job, has been proven in Bremen. They decided there last year to encourage the employment of more women in the public services. As a result the number of men and women trainees who are hired must be proportionate to the numbers of males and females in the population. This opens up more opportunities for women. In this city-state the majority of the population are women.

3. New technologies - chances for women

In recent years working life has undergone a change which is still not concluded. New technologies have been introduced. Jobs on assembly lines have been rationalised.

Automatons and micro-processors (chips) have taken over work on the assembly lines formerly done by women. For women this meant re-training programmes and further education. Higher qualifications are required.

The number of women in the Federal Republic of Germany employed in occupations where the law requires them to be socially insured increased by three per cent between 1974 and 1982 - from 7.8 to 8 million. But the proportion of women who are unemployed is still higher than the proportion of men: in Spring, 1984 it was 10 per cent (men: 8 %). In the book "Forbidden Dreams" Gudrun Trautwein-Kalms writes on this point: "These statistics omit a considerable number of unemployed women because they are not registered (due to the 'tidying up' of the statistics and their situation in the 'hidden reserves' which are estimated to total 800,000 made up mainly of women). Taken altogether women are more frequently unemployed than men."

That is a fact for which there are various reasons. Women have to give up their jobs more often for family reasons. Getting back into working life is becoming more difficult. Higher qualifications are demanded as a result of the new technologies - anyone who has been out of work for some time and not done any further training during the interval, frequently has no chance of returning. Women who have not acquired their qualifications through a thorough training but have "just picked it up on the job" find it even more difficult to be taken on again. One further factor is that a high proportion of women's jobs are in those sectors of industry that are being changed and rationalised by the new technology. For example, in the electronics industry, in office machines and data processing, in banking and insurance as well watchmaking and printing. There has been a radical reorganisation of office work, a traditional domain of women. Shorthand-typists and copy-typists have difficulties today in finding jobs - their work is being done by electronic text systems.

The slogan in this case is also "higher qualifications." Women are adapting to this situation. In the short period from 1980 to 1982 the proportion of women office workers with trained qualifications (apprenticeship, vocational school or trade school) increased by 14 per cent. Gudrun Trautwein-Kalms fears that it will not be easy for women. Because "frequently these women are engaged on writing, calculation and video-screen jobs which are particularly vulnerable to rationalisation. The proportion of women with a solid vocational background and final exams (apprenticeship, vocational school, trade school) has increased most in these fields of activity - by 16 per cent.

At the same time the new technology is being presented in some cases as "advantageous to women." With the aid of computers, it is said, more jobs at home can be created, enabling women to continue their vocation while taking care of the family. They can divide their working day between the kitchen, the children and the computer. But the disadvantages of this are already programmed. For the women who work at home are isolated from their former colleagues. If the firm they work for runs into production difficulties they would be the first to lose their jobs. Gisela Schade, head of the women's section of the Trade Union Federation in Hessen, fears that home workers would become victims of "the dismantling of social and legal safeguards." Employers view it differently. At a conference on the subject of "New technologies, technical developments and women's jobs" a spokesman for the electronics concern, Siemens, said seven per cent of all jobs could be transferred to private homes by 1990 with the aid of new technologies. The new type of work created by the new type of technology would demand "a lifelong readiness to learn."

A "lifelong readiness to learn" could add to the double burden of women. For someone who has to hold down a job as well as continue with vocational training while bringing up a family and running a home is under much more stress than a man who is to a large extent uninvolved in family tasks. The process of re-thinking the roles of male and female in

society, which has already started, will have to move much faster to protect women from the foreseeable consequences in the form of psychic and physical stress.

At a hearing in Bonn on the subject of "Women's situation on the labour market" the new technology was not damned in any way. But the demand was raised that women must be far better prepared for this new world of work. The "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" warned:

"New technologies are more than a terrifying threat. They lead to the abolition of women's traditional jobs but at the same time they create new and, in most cases, better ones. But women are in a particularly bad starting position where new technology is concerned and there is a danger that this third technical revolution will roll on its way without women being able to seize the opportunities that it offers."

The initial aid enabling them to exploit these opportunities must come in the first place from outside. It must begin primarily in the schools where girls can learn how to use computers and monitors. Re-training courses will be required, oriented on a completely new labour market. All too often the present vocational schools are teaching conventional office techniques which are out of date the moment the course is over.

Most women are ready to re-learn and re-think. Seven out of 10 women who are unemployed in the Federal Republic of Germany are willing to be re-trained for a new, non-traditional vocation. This is the conclusion drawn from research by the Commission of the European Community. Women are taking over more and more jobs in western Europe. In the Federal Republic of Germany alone the number of women doing practical work as trainees rose from 13,000 in 1977 to 49,000 in 1982. About 57 per cent of the young women who have gone in for a re-training practical course are at work in the firm where they were trained.

Trade unionist Gudrun Trautwein-Kalms (1.6 million women belong to trade unions in the Federal Republic of Germany) encourages women. She said: "The idea that technical progress leads automatically to social progress is one that nobody

today believes in any more. But fear of technology, which has increased, particularly among women, is no good either; fear can make people defenceless. Democratic control requires women to be competent. If they are not to fall victim to technology women must understand it, select the positive chances that it offers and go after them." Women will have to move into fields of knowledge which in many cases even today they are scared of entering.

Women who re-orientate themselves in their working life have shown that they have the courage to come to grips with new technology. In one former male province women have made themselves quite at home - as underground train drivers. More than 600 women drive city trains and trams in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Association of Electricity Works in Frankfurt-on-Main says they are involved in fewer accidents than men. One supervisor praised women. "They drive more carefully, defensively."

Sylvia Spang, a former hairdresser, is literally on a new road in life. According to information from the Chamber of Industry and Trade in the Saarland she is the first woman to gain the title "Industrial master in powered transport." This professional status has only existed since 1983. Sylvia Spang went in for re-training as a bus driver and continued with a 6-months advanced course before taking her master's test.

4. New Start at 35

In February, 1985, the Bonn Family Minister and CDU General Secretary Heiner Geissler said it was out-of-date to restrict women to being mothers and housewives while the men went out to work. Men and women, said the Minister, should have the choice between household and vocation. The politician had appreciated that most women these days no longer want to be forced to choose between the family and their job. They want to combine both. The patent formula is a "new partnership" of work and family.

Women in the Federal Republic of Germany are attracting the attention of politicians this year. For far too long they have

been viewed more as housewives than partners and reminded more of their "duties" than their rights. Many young women had already drifted into the political opposition. Now the ruling CDU is trying to catch up. "Farewell to a male-dominated society? Women and Men on the road to a new partnership" was the title of a conference in Adenauer House in Born. A few days later the Second German TV Channel followed up with a major discussion programme entitled "How to Win the Women?" Invited as a guest Families Minister Heiner Geissler had to speak and answer questions.

The Minister produced a draft proposal from his Ministry for the payment of "Care-money" to young mothers and fathers at the rate of DM 600 a month. To start with this would be paid for the first 10 months after the birth of a child. Whichever parent stays at home to take care of the child would have his or her job guaranteed for this period. The Minister wants to begin this project on January 1, 1986. For a start 1.5 billion D-mark have been set aside but by 1989 three billion D-mark will be needed. The parent concerned will have his or her health and unemployment insurance paid by the state. And the monthly "care money" of DM 600 will not affect their entitlement to any other social security benefits.

The Minister's plans have aroused controversy. The Lower Saxony Economics Minister Birgit Blenel, CDU, criticised the project which, she said, amounted in practice to a "professional ban" on women because no medium-sized firm could guarantee the job of an absent employee for one year.

The German Women Lawyers' Federation also pointed out in the television discussion that smaller companies would never be able to give such guarantees. Angelika Pohlenz, an executive with the German Bank (one of the Federal Republic's principal commercial banks) also complained that the job-guarantee had not been adequately discussed with those "who in the long run will have to pay the bill."

"Partnership" is the motto. Many critics of the scheme say the families should be left to decide for themselves who takes care of the children.

Most women in the Federal Republic of Germany would like to combine their working life with their family duties. As long as the children are small they want to devote their time to bringing them up. Later they would like to return to their jobs. Or they might have to return because the family's financial situation requires it. But this often causes difficulties. Returning to their jobs after a longish time away taking care of the family is becoming more difficult all the time. For the jobs make bigger demands. If the woman has failed to keep herself abreast of developments it is not easy to catch up.

In the course of a "workshop" on the ways firms can help to advance women's careers, Irmgard Karwatzki, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Minister for Youth, Families and Health, referred to experiments in re-integrating women in their jobs. She said these had shown how necessary it is for the women to maintain constant contact with their jobs. At the moment consideration is being given to how this can be done in practice - by further education measures, for example, or by letting mothers "stand in" for others who are doing their old job when they are ill or on holiday.

One special project, directed specifically at this group of women bears the title "New Start at 35". This is a programme devised by the CDU Federal committee on social policy for the vocational re-integration of women. The main idea of this programme is "freedom of choice" plus the possibility of putting whatever decision is made into actual practice. The committee's paper states:

"Freedom of choice means that men and women can decide whether they want to concentrate entirely or mainly on family affairs or on a vocation outside the house or whether they should combine family and job.

"Freedom of choice for women depends to a considerable extent on getting rid of the notion that men can only perform certain fixed roles and on establishing a partner-relationship between men and women in all aspects of life. Disadvantages, compulsions and traditional ideas that stand in the way that men and women would like to live, must be removed."

Since 1970 the number of women aged between 35 and 40 who have gone back into their jobs has steadily increased. After they have brought up their children more women want to return to their vocation. In the Federal Republic of Germany about two-thirds of all women have interrupted their careers at least once. Whereas formerly it was customary for women to give up their jobs on getting married, today they remain at work until the first child comes and occasionally until the birth of the second child. The average period of time they remain at work before giving up their jobs for the first time is eight years. At the same the interval between stopping and resuming work is becoming shorter. About 36 per cent of the women who resumed their careers had been at home for less than two years. After two years normally they have not completely lost contact with their working sphere and possibly it is easier to return.

Long periods away from the job extending to as much as 10 years are found among women over 40, those with several children, women who were unskilled workers and women who have not completed their vocational training. If these women want to go back to work (or have to for financial reasons), the situation is extremely difficult.

The Laender (States) and local authorities have introduced various measures to assist women in taking up their careers again. There are women's advancement programmes for the public service, further educational courses and re-integration courses for specific vocations which are frequently linked with practical work on the job.

The Federal Office of Labour has been called on to provide more funds for enlarging re-integration assistance, the public service is supposed to lead the way by engaging more

women. Private firms as well as the Federal government, in its role as an employer, should enable women to maintain contact with their jobs during the family phase.

The possibility is also being discussed of organising re-integration courses that are not aimed exclusively at returning to paid employment but also open the way for women to take on voluntary unpaid work in fields that are important for the general welfare. Periods thus spent would be recognised as "professional qualification time for social vocations."

The Berlin Social Senator, Ulf Fink, chairman of the Federal committee on social policy of the CDU, has calculated that it would cost less than 100 million D-mark a year to promote the vocational re-integration of women. The annual budget of the Federal Office of Labour amounts to 35 billion D-mark. The politician knows what he is talking about. Berlin (West) has started a re-integration scheme for women which costs two million D-mark a year and is successful. The public service of the Land (State) Berlin has cooperated in providing 18,000 part-time jobs.

5. The Work of Women's Cooperatives

There is a whole series of programmes designed to facilitate women's return to work. But there are still women who, so to speak, slip through the net - women who cannot produce a proper school-leaving certificate or have only worked in "helping-out" jobs, women who lack the self-confidence to report to the employment office. Often they have small children to look after and many employers decline them because they fear the women will stay away from work every time a child is ill. Have these women got no chance?

For such women the Land (State) government of Hessen has started something that could become an example for others. This is the "Centre for Women's Cooperatives." in Giessen. Fifteen women, including three social workers and a woman tailor, work here at needlework and knitting. They take on

repair work as well as washing and ironing, particularly for old people and persons living alone. Further services are planned - washing cars and baby-sitting for example. The cooperatives are supposed to administer themselves; the women therefore learn something about book-keeping and tax matters.

Many women gain self confidence through activities in such projects.

6. Women - Marriage and Family

The latest population census was in April, 1982. At that time there were 22.9 million families living in the Federal Republic of Germany. Of these 15.1 million (66.1 %) were married couple with and without children. Of the 1.7 million single parents 85 per cent were mothers. The trend towards the small family continues, that means most couples have only one or two children. In the documentation "Women in the Federal Republic of Germany" published by the Federal Families Ministry, it is stated that "the proportion of families with four or more children to families as a whole was higher in 1982 among workers (2.5 per cent) and officials (1.0 percent) than among self-employed (0.8 per cent) and salaried workers (0.7 per cent). Of the salaried workers, 29.8 per cent had one child, officials 28.8 per cent, workers 28.5 per cent and self-employed 24.9 per cent."

In 1982 362,000 couples were married in the Federal Republic of Germany. The number of divorces in the same year was 118,483 - that is about 78 divorces per 10,000 marriages. And this trend has been upward for the last 11 years. Most marriages that end in divorce do so by mutual consent after the partners have been living apart for at least one year. The highest divorce rate is found in marriages of between three and six years duration and among women in the 25-30 age-group. On the other hand the number of persons living together without being married has increased still further.

According to the researches of the Federal Institute for Population Research in Wiesbaden, it is the fear of being tied down and the desire for economic independence that stops couples going to the church or registry office.

The desire for economic independence is also on the increase among married couples. More and more of them are going to public notaries and signing agreements dividing their possessions. The majority of these are by no means people of property. Most of them have no possessions but they want to preserve their economic independence in the married partnership. In 1958 the Equal Rights law gave expression to the equality of women in the family laid down in the constitution. Since then husband and wife both have the legal right to earn their own living and both are responsible on a partnership basis for the management of the home. A woman's household tasks are no longer formally paid down. But not until the last 10 years has there been any perceptible change in the distributoon of roles between the sexes. The idea of "partnership" is therefore taken for granted much more among young couples than among those who have been married for a long time. The German family sociologist Rene Koenig formulates it thus: "The family moves with society, which means that every society has the family that, under certain social-historical conditions, belongs to it."

Whereas throughout the rest of the Federation the word "partnership" has led to a softening-up of the traditional male and female roles. the Land (State) of Bavaria continues on its own way. In the Bavarian constitution the woman is still fixed in her role as housewife and mother. Only recently the Bavarian constitutional court dismissed a lawsuit brought in Munich by a former SPD member of the Bavarian parliament. The woman politician claimed that Article 131, paragraph 4 of the Bavarian constitution conflicted with the principle of equality.

The constitution states in so many words: "Girls are to specially instructed in care of babies, bringing up children and home management." The bench of eight judges - all men - confirmed the traditional roles in their judgement and said that bringing up children and running the household were regarded as tasks for women. They added that women who have a vocation "usually have to bear the double burden of their job and the home."

A judgement such as this does not correspond to the opinion of the majority of the population. Among young men in the Federal Republic of Germany the "breadwinner" role is regarded as out of date just as is the "housewife" role among girls. At the end of 1984 the women's magazine, Brigitte published an opinion poll taken by the Sample Institute. Young men as well as old were asked what they thought of the "breadwinner-role." The result was surprising. Forty per cent of young men under the age of 25 declared that they were not looking for any firm bond. And more than half did not think it important to nourish a family, whereas of those men over 55 who were questioned, the majority were in favour of a permanent relationship.

When the young women were interviewed the answers of the young men caused no surprise. Because they held the same views. For 35 per cent of the women under 25 a permanent relationship was likewise not something they set great store by. In the age-group up to 25 even fewer women than men (35% against 41%) believed that the man should take over the role of "breadwinner."

It is primarily the young women in the Federal Republic of Germany who want to gain their independence and keep it. Federal Justice Minister Hans Engelhard (F.D.P.) has said this trend is one for concern and has drawn attention to the increasing rate of divorce and the declining number of marriages. It is a fact that it is the women by an overwhelming majority who initiate divorce proceedings.

The figures speak for themselves: in 1965 39,987 women applied for a divorce as against 18,741 men. In 1982 the comparable figures were 71,101 women and 37,161 men.

Women however are not opposed to partnership. This is shown by the figures for "marriages without a certificate." The judiciary has now got into step with the changed attitude of society. In 1984 the courts decided that men and women who live in a quasi-married partnership should be eligible for social assistance just as if they were married.

With the growing self-confidence of women one subject has come out in public that was formerly treated as taboo - the physical and psychical mistreatment of women in marriage as well as in partnerships. In the mid-Seventies the first houses for battered women were established where women who had been ill-treated could find at least temporary refuge while they were trying to re-organise their lives. The Federal Ministry for Youth, Families and Health sponsored the first (Berlin) women's house as a model project from 1977 to 1979 and likewise the accompanying the accompanying research. Today more than 130 cities in the Federal Republic of Germany have such houses. Many of these establishments, however, find themselves in financial difficulties. The "Greens" in the Federal parliament have demanded a Federal fund to provide 50 million D-mark for women's houses. The advantage of such a fund would be that the Laender (States) and local authorities which are compelled by the Federal social assistance laws to meet other costs in the women's houses, would not have to bear additional burdens.

"Violence against women" is not confined to families. Verbal and physical assault, including rape, is on the increase. Women try to protect themselves with emergency call installations. The "Emergency call for victims of rape" established in Mainz is financially supported by the Federal Families Ministry as a model of its kind. Women want to bring about a change in public opinion which tends to view rape as a "cavalier's offence." Emergency call installations on the lines of those set up by the self-aid group in Mainz are now functioning in most large cities. Helpful women accompany the victim to the

police, give them support during the trials and procure if necessary women lawyers for them.

The judges are cooperating. A man who held a woman captive for several hours, was sentenced recently in Marburg to five years in prison for rape, use of force and holding a person under duress. Dr. Herbert Guenther, judge at the provincial court in Marburg, commented: "The deterrent character of the punishment must be made clear."

The Federal Families Ministry acknowledged in 1984 that: "For women who have been raped, hitherto only very limited aid has been forthcoming from the official side apart from the possibility of a charge; among the population at large as well as officials there is a prejudice against the person concerned and ignorance about the miscreants. Police statistics for 1982 record 6,708 cases of rape." This is an increase. Thanks to the fact that the Emergency call and advice bureau for women victims set up in Mainz, has received official support, more women now have the courage to prosecute for offences of rape.

7. Opportunities in the third phase of life

In recent years the age structure of the population in the Federal Republic of Germany has undergone a change. There are fewer children and young people under 15 and there are more people over 65. Among men this group increased between 1971 and 1980 from 4.4 per cent to 11.5 per cent; among women it has risen even more from 4.8 per cent to 18.9 per cent. In 1982 the population of the Federal Republic of Germany was 61.5 million of whom 7.8 million women and 4.4 million men were over 60 years of age. Of these 6 million women and 3.5 million men were 65 or older. In the higher age-groups women likewise are in the majority (1,000 men: 1,765 women).

One reason for this is the loss of life in two world wars. Another reason is the higher life expectancy of women.

(Statistically women in 1980 had a 6.7 year longer life expectancy than men). Furthermore it is calculated that the proportion of old men in the population will continue to decrease up to 1990 while the proportion of old women will increase. Most of these women are on their own - widowed, divorced or single.

In former years such women lived in the family group - often tolerated rather than loved. Today many of them lead an independent life and are politically active in self-aid groups of older citizens ("grey panthers") or they make use of the educational opportunities offered by local authorities. The number of places offered to senior citizens by the universities has also increased. And the "universities of the third phase of life" are not aiming to attract only academically educated persons. Nevertheless taking pleasure in learning is a necessary pre-condition for many - and so these activities are more or less reserved for those older women who have had a school education with qualifications.

Until the end of 1983 an experiment was being carried out in Tuebingen with funds from the Federal Minister for Youth, Families and Health, in which older women were encouraged to take a more active part in shaping their lives. The Bonn politicians wanted to bring about a change not only in the women themselves but also in employers, trade unions and the churches - "a change in the estimation of possible activities for older women."

For some years now trade unions and institutions for adult education have been preparing people still at work for their coming retirement. The "pension-shock" should be avoided. In most cases, however, this is a measure that only concerns men. Because of their family responsibilities and honorary activities women usually have in addition to their job such a wide field of activity that the "pension-shock" hardly exists for them. Five to six million people in the Federal Republic of Germany exercise some form of honorary activity - women who have a job are more active than housewives.

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9. Addresses

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German Federation of Housewives
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Groups for untrained women. Contact address: "Women Against
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Association of women married to foreigners. Contact address:
IAF Centre, Mainzer Landstrasse 239-241, 6000 Frankfurt-on-Main 1

Women's Archives. Contact address: "Feminist Archive and
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(Contact addresses can possibly supply other addresses in the
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